

# Looming ICE Operation Overshadows Salt Lake City's Celebration For Immigrants

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*Ballet folklórico dancers performed at Salt Lake City immigration celebration.*  
ROCIO HERNANDEZ / KUER

This weekend, immigration officials are looking to deport as many as 2,000 migrant families in major U.S. cities including Denver, Miami and Chicago.

The looming deportation operation overshadowed Salt Lake City's Immigrant Heritage Month celebration on Friday. The Salt Lake City government brought out a bright red 'I LOVE SLC' art piece for the event that highlighted the diversity of the city.

"When those in power talk about putting America first, they make it clear they lost sight of what made America successful in the first place," said Mayor Jackie Biskupski.

Immigrants make up 8.7% of Utah's population, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau. Of those Utah immigrants, 110,000 of them — about 40% — are undocumented, according to a June 12 report by the Pew Research Center.

While there's no indication that the operation will come to Utah, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers have targeted workers in Park City, Moab and Hyrum in the past.

Karen McCreary, the former executive director of the ACLU of Utah, had just taken the leadership role in late 2006 when Utah was included in a multi-state immigration raid in which nearly 1,300 workers of six meat-packing plants were apprehended.

Immigration officials picked up 154 workers from Swift & Co. meat-packing plant in community of Hyrum outside of Logan.

"That impacted families. Many of individuals roundup had children that were left without parents," McCreary said. "It was a very chaotic and frightening time for those people and all their families and friends and the community around them."

Friday's celebration of immigrants included dancers in colorful, traditional Mexican dresses and mariachi suits or trajes de charros from the Ballet Folkórico ECK Estrellas Juveniles and Westside Dance groups.

It also featured a song from Victoria Sethunya — an immigrant from Southern Africa whose son was deported in January 2018, and Mexican immigrant, writer and activist Gloria Arredondo who recited her poem titled The Oak.

"The wind will never cause it to bend. It can only blow hard enough to shake off the acorns," Arredondo read.

She compares the oak's resilience to immigrants — who stand tall — in the face of what's happening in America today.

"It takes people with souls who see us as human beings that don't belong in cages and I'm so grateful to you, Mayor Biskupski, for being one of those people who can see us immigrants as fellow human beings."